

**TOPIC 11: COMPLICATIONS OF DIABETES (OVERVIEW)****STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Complications of diabetes can develop as diabetes progresses. Practicing preventive care and being alert to early warning signs of health problems can prevent, delay, or limit the severity of kidney disease, heart or blood vessel disease, eye or vision problems, and numbness resulting from peripheral nerve damage.

**KEY MESSAGES**

1. Over time, diabetes can lead to other long term health problems, such as kidney disease, heart or blood vessel disease, eye/vision problems and damage to nerves resulting in loss of feeling in feet and hands.
2. Although the idea of having these long- term problems is scary, the good news is that keeping your blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol under control, along with regular health care, will improve your chances of preventing or lessening these problems.
3. Work with your doctor to learn more about how to screen for and prevent these complications

**BACKGROUND**

Over time, diabetes can lead to other long-term health problems and/or complications. Some of these include:

Neuropathy (damage to the nerves): Nerves can become either more or less sensitive and may result in the loss of feeling in your feet and hands

Retinopathy (eye damage): Eye damage can result in poor vision and even blindness if left untreated.

Nephropathy (kidney disease): The kidneys can become less able to filter the waste products from the blood and produce urine.

Heart and blood vessel disease: People with diabetes are at higher risk for heart attacks and strokes.

Research has shown that keeping blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol within the target range may prevent, delay or limit the severity of these problems. In addition, keeping blood sugar and blood pressure at target ranges may prevent pre-existing problems from worsening. Regular health care visits that include urine tests, foot checks, blood cholesterol levels, and a yearly dilated eye exam can help you track changes and prevent complications.

**PATIENT OUTCOMES/GOALS**

By the end of the educational session, the client with diabetes will be able to:

- State four common complications of diabetes.
- List 2 factors that increase the risk of developing complications/problems associated with diabetes.
- State one step to take to prevent complications

1 These materials were adapted from *Type 2 Diabetes: A Curriculum for Patients and Health Professionals*, American Diabetes Association, 2002.

CHW ACTIONS	PARTICIPANT ACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss with the participant the possible complications of diabetes and the risk factors.</li> <li>• Affirm preventive measures the participant is already engaged in e.g. keeping blood glucose within target range, managing blood pressure, having regular physical and eye exams, not smoking etc.</li> <li>• Work with the participant to identify an action step to prevent complications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify a preventive measure that you can take to reduce the risk and/or severity of complications.</li> </ul>

### TOOLS/TEACHING AIDES

- None

### HANDOUTS

1. **Topic 11 Coversheet**.....[English](#) | [Spanish](#)
2. **Complications of Diabetes (Overview)** .....[English](#) | [Spanish](#)  
Source: Cass, Tiernan, [A Diabetes–Self Management Program, Community Health Access Program \(CHAP\)](#), Galveston County Health District, 11/2004
3. **Action Plan**.....[English](#) | [Spanish](#)  
Source: [Public Health – Seattle & King County](#)

### REFERENCES

- Type 2 Diabetes: A Curriculum for Patients and Health Professionals, American Diabetes Association, 2002.

Version	Date	Description	Staff	Final
V.1.	12/23/2011	Original	KA/ JK	Yes
V.2.	11/13/2013	Revision	JK/KN	Yes
V.2.1	08/07/2014	Updated Formatting	ND	Yes

<sup>3</sup> These materials were adapted from *Type 2 Diabetes: A Curriculum for Patients and Health Professionals*, American Diabetes Association, 2002.